

KVNSTHALLE ATHENA

This is Not My Beautiful House

Anastasia Ax, Apostolos Georgiou, Socratis Socratous and Kostis Velonis

Opening: Friday, May 16th, 2014, 21:00

DJ sets: Agent Mo, Ted Sourvinos

A series of performances under the title *Political Speeches* will take place as part of the parallel events programme. Participants: Dean Spunt from No Age (June 7), Laura Lovatel, Federica Menin, and many more to be announced soon.

Borrowing its title from the lyrics of the famous song by Talking Heads, the exhibition *This is Not My Beautiful House* will bring together four artists: **Anastasia Ax, Apostolos Georgiou, Socratis Socratous and Kostis Velonis**, who are engaged, directly or indirectly, with the present 'Greek' – not to say global – condition.

The everyday here in Greece seems like a leaky vessel. And while the water level is dropping, ideas on how to survive in the post-capitalism desert do not come easily. The scenario is pretty ruthless, yet life seems to go on, seeking its best outcome, under the warm sun.

As we are experiencing this period of change, where everything is in flux, the space loses its shape and transforms into nothingness. Athens reveals itself as a utopian place: a space for the impossible and for 'everything that is possible'. Amidst all these we find ourselves in limbo. Unaccustomed to the speed of change as well as to the density of events that occur in multiple layers all at once we become alien to all our own given assumptions.

In terms of the best of the worse, the daily routine is not the daily routine we knew anymore; the city is not the city we knew anymore; the politics are not the politics we can recognise anymore; our belongings do not belong to us anymore; and the public space does not belong to us either, although private space is negotiable, if there still is one. We are an entity in transfer, a country on sale, in which nothing is familiar anymore. We are living through a rapture.

This is Not My Beautiful House as a title has no direct references to 80s pop music or New York culture. In the absence of any other significant manifestos, it serves as the perfect tag to describe a world that is unfolding between fears and desires stigmatised by the current economic and social moment. As a line from a pop song, this quote has surely been interpreted and felt in many different ways by many different people. In the case of this exhibition, it becomes a parable for the contemporary state of social and existential alienation. *This is Not My Beautiful House* refers here to contradictory notions and desires like going or staying, living or dying, trying or surrendering, hoping or giving up; a topography in which the only certainty is that things cannot go on anymore as they were.

Kunsthalle Athena chooses to focus this year once more on Greek artists. With the exception of Anastasia Ax, who is an artist with dual houses and dual exiles, and vividly experiences the Greek situation via family and relatives, the other artists insist on living in Athens, despite the difficult situation and the fact that their international careers might have provided them with a way to leave.

Anastasia Ax

Born in Stockholm to Greek and Swedish parents, lives in Stockholm.

“For several years Anastasia Ax has developed an artistic process where sculpture, performance, ink drawing and sound meet in a violent fusion.” (Andreas Hagström).

For this exhibition Ax is presenting the work titled *Exile*, which has been previously exhibited in various forms in multiple places. During the course of the exhibition the installation will be continuously reshaped, becoming each time a different discursive platform. Starting in the form of a strangely familiar village-constellation, frozen in time and devoid of contextual details, as it appears plastered down, the installation will transform into a destruction camp, and will resolve into an archaeological dig just before the end of the exhibition, where an archaeologist will try to categorise the contemporary ruins. The references that *Exile* makes to the current situation are obvious, but the work is neither a mirror nor a documentation of the reality, but an open-ended scenario based on the current state of affairs.

Apostolos Georgiou

Born in Thessaloniki, Apostolos Georgiou lives in Athens.

“A vase of flowers can convey the same kind of drama – a box of emotions ready to explode at any moment – as a face. A painting must have the tension to provoke us to look at it; to wake us up from a state of indifference. Then the rest will come.” (Apostolos Georgiou)

Georgiou’s work is about people, normal people, in normal spaces. Behind the pretext of abstraction and colouration, architecture and form, his work is about all of us, in our familiar and unfamiliar environments, stripped of our professional and social identities and achievements. Have these people done something really wrong? Have they violated boundaries? Or not? Georgiou’s scenarios demand our urgent attention, while at the same time having no distinct past or prescribed future, alluding, in a certain way, to the dramaturgy one finds in some of David Lynch’s films like *Inland Empire*, for example. His paintings are psychodramas that tell stories. Truly sad stories even if they are told with acidic humour. The main subject is failure, happening though with elegant grandeur. Greece in the late 1950s and 1960s seems to be the main influence for his scenarios; and thus many of us find in his figures and environments our parents, our childhood at first, and then ourselves as an extension.

Socratis Socratous

Born in Pafos, Cyprus, Socratis Socratous lives in Athens.

His work refers to an osmosis of politics and art, even though it often has actual political ramifications. At the same time, it mirrors the limits reached by the artist. His installations are often a composition of a series of photographs and the issues that follow from them, together with the utility of ready-mades, while his sculptures appear to refer to a ‘violated’ sense of reality. This, as an aesthetic fact, is perceived through their form; however abstract this may be, one can be aware of its roots in the images that surround us. Gardens as an idyllic space, as a refuge from hectic reality, are a pertinent subject that occurs repeatedly in Socratous’s work. Yet gardens due to their accessibility refer also to the notion of vulnerability. It is the weak point of the home, the weak point of the city. For this exhibition he presents a new installation titled *Stolen Garden* (2014) consisting of a set of bronze-casted flowers, twigs, fruits and leafs. Socratous ‘steals’ from the national garden in Athens, specific plants that are the national symbols of Greece as well as parasitic plants

that grow near them. The new installation will become an elusive landscape, parallel to the one of the city of Athens as it being formed during the current crisis.

Kostis Velonis

Kostis Velonis was born and lives in Athens.

His sculptures, most often made of wood, articulate narratives that link personal stories to the revisiting of historical events and material cultural facts, including the stage production of avant-garde theatre and working class history. His intention is to evoke contradictory ideas, using the simple materials of a failed builder. His pieces often come across as an adult version of children's toys. Velonis seems to be an expert in representing an indescribable yet concrete bipolarity. Through the coalition of references coming both from his sensitive private moments as well as from the hegemonic historicising of culture, he manages to aptly describe a world that is oscillating between social life and solitude, city lights and desert, sophistication and naivety, knowledge and gut feelings. For this exhibition he will be presenting three new works from 2013 and 2014 titled ***Tribune Leading to the Ramp and Ramp Leading to the Tribune, Rural Management, Untitled (Settlement)*** and a prophetic video piece from 2010 titled ***How One Can Think Freely in the Shadow of a Temple***.

This is Not My Beautiful House is curated by Kunsthalle Athena team:

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Assistant curator: Alfredo Pechuan

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www.kunsthalleathena.org/press

Duration: May 16 – September 11, 2014 (closed in August)

Opening hours: Wednesday – Thursday, 18:30 - 21:00, Saturday 12:00 - 15:00

Kunsthalle Athena, 28, Kerameikou Street, Kerameikos - Metaxourgeio, Athens, Greece

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